

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**  
**Fee Proposals for OHV Recreation Areas in the Barstow Field Office**  
**(Draft version, 9/11/03)**

**Q. Is BLM going to charge fees for OHV recreation in the Barstow area?**

A -- BLM has made no decisions on fees but we are conducting public outreach to gather ideas about proposals to develop a fee demonstration program for the OHV recreation areas in the BLM's Barstow Field Office.

**Q. What is the fee demo program?**

A -- The fee demonstration program was authorized by Congress in 1993 (Public Law 103-66) to provide BLM authority to collect recreation use fees in intensively used areas where it is justified. BLM is considering a fee demo program for the Barstow OHV recreation areas to better manage site maintenance, on-site staffing, law enforcement, and emergency medical services. Funding these activities has been an ongoing issue for the Barstow OHV Program for several years.

**Q. Why is this program being considered now?**

A -- In 1998, an overall business plan was developed for the entire California Desert District, which called for the development of "micro-business plans" specifically analyzing future possible fee sites. The Barstow Field Office contracted with an outside, independent consultant to develop such a plan for the OHV areas under its jurisdiction. That plan has been completed and is available on the Barstow BLM website at [www.ca.blm.gov/barstow](http://www.ca.blm.gov/barstow). It:

- Describes the fee program
- Discloses the BLM's past budget, including federal and State of California OHV ("green sticker") funds
- Discloses the cost of managing each of the areas and proposes fees for Dumont Dunes, El Mirage, Johnson Valley and Stoddard Valley, but no fees for Rasor
- Outlines possible facilities that should be developed
- Analyzes various collection methods disclosing the pros and cons to each
- Includes a communication plan to help the BLM relay information about the proposed fee demo program to the public
- Includes a customer feedback mechanism that will give the public the ability to interact with the BLM about the fee program.

**Q. Is BLM going to implement the business plan?**

A. The business plan simply provides BLM data, economic analyses, and recommendations; it is not a decision document. BLM is now in the process of

conducting intensive public outreach to discuss the plan's findings and recommendations with our OHV constituencies and other affected interests.

**Q. What was the business plan's bottom line?**

A -- The business plan recommended that about \$3.5 million would be needed to meet anticipated public demands for services and provide optimum management of the Barstow OHV program. The increased funding recommended would be used for properly maintaining access roads, providing for necessary medical and law enforcement services, providing adequate signing and visitor information, and providing for improved visitor services or facilities.

**Q. Isn't management of these areas already paid for through my taxes?**

A -- The BLM manages about 261 million acres nationwide and about 15 million here in California. Congress generally gives BLM enough funding to manage these lands for primitive dispersed recreation. When the amount and types of services and facilities required for intensively used recreation areas exceeds the availability of federal funds, collection of user fees is authorized as described earlier. BLM is seeking the public's input on whether user fees are justified in the case of the Barstow OHV areas.

**Q. Shouldn't OHV ("green sticker") funds be used to provide these services?**

A -- Last year, the State of California's Off-Highway Vehicle Commission, which oversees the distribution of funds from the fees paid by OHV owners and other revenues, received \$25 million in grant requests for the \$16 million available. This year, \$40 million dollars in grants requests have been made for the \$17 million available and decisions will be made later this year on allocation of those funds. Further, recent State law (AB 2274) has been enacted to redirect allocation of funds more towards restoration as well as conservation and environmental studies, further reducing the amount of funds available for facility operations and maintenance. It is simply unknown how much may be available for the Barstow OHV areas and more dependable sources of operations and maintenance funds are needed.

**Q. I read in the newspaper that the fees are going to be \$20.00 for a weekly pass and \$60.00 for a year-long pass. Why so much?**

A -- Again, no decisions have been made about the fees or the amounts. The proposed fees cited are from recommendations in the business plan that are based on a variety of factors. This information is displayed on the tables starting on page 28 of the business plan.

**Q. How would BLM spend the money proposed for collection?**

A -- The business plan identifies a desired level of service for each area, including physical developments, increases in law enforcement, medical aid, facility maintenance, and other visitor services. Most important, all funds proposed for collection at these areas will be used to provide that level of service specifically at these areas. In other words, all money collected at these areas will stay here and only be used to support the operations and maintenance programs for these four areas. The plan recommends an annual independent audit of collections and expenditures that will be available for review. Included in this annual report will be the spending plan for the next budget year. Public input and feedback throughout the year would be gathered via on-site discussions, comment cards, and via the BLM's webpage.

**Q. How would proposed fees be collected?**

A -- The business plan explores several fee collection programs ranging from passive "iron rangers," to active fee collection at a "toll booth" on the entrance road. Generally, site collections would be done by a contractor hired by BLM. Other fee collection methods being considered in the plan include web-based collection methods and programs that would allow fees to be paid by external vendors. These collection methods are less costly to develop and implement and the savings will be passed on to the customer. For example, the proposed weekly pass, if purchased on-site, would cost \$20, but only \$15 if purchased in advance from the web-based program. There would be similar savings on the annual pass.

**Q. Is a daily pass being considered?**

A -- All available visitor use information indicates that most visitors to these areas generally stay for a weekend and often for long weekends. A daily pass proposal would require visitors to buy two or even three daily passes for this longer use period. The information also indicates visitors from the local area that do use the area in one day increments do so frequently enough to justify an annual pass. Further, daily passes would likely be sought and purchased on-site which is the most expensive collection method available and the cost to the visitor might be in the \$7 to \$10 range. However, if visitors support a daily pass through the public outreach now underway, BLM would certainly consider it. We are interested in any ideas on how to make this program more effective and less costly. Finally, one additional potential benefit of the weekly pass is that it would be good at all four areas. For example, a visitor could use a pass purchased for El Mirage at any of the other Barstow fee under the current interchangeable pass being considered.

**Q. What if I cannot afford to pay any fee to use these areas?**

A -- Under the proposal being considered, the 22,485-acre Rasor OHV Open area would not be included within the fee demonstration program and no fee is proposed there. The business plan found that BLM's costs to operate and manage this area have not increased. It has also been suggested by the public that BLM consider a periodic "free day" in some

of the other areas. That suggestion and any others that address the affordability issue will certainly be evaluated as part of the ongoing public outreach effort.

**Q. Would I need to pay a fee for each of my OHVs or do the fees being considered cover multiple vehicles?**

A -- The proposed fee would apply to your primary vehicle, that is, the vehicle that you drive into the recreation area. If that is an RV with a trailer full of OHVs, you would need only one pass. This method is used in many other areas including the State of California's Vehicle Recreation Areas, and the BLM's Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area.

**Q. I compete in OHV events within the areas that are being considered for fee collection. I am already paying fees for my "green sticker," fees to BLM to participate in the event, and under this new proposal, I would pay another fee. How can that be justified?**

A -- Your point is well taken and that is one of the key issues being discussed as part of the public outreach process now underway. The fees you describe are collected for uniquely different purposes. The State of California issues the green sticker under State law and regulations and BLM, as a Federal agency, has no jurisdiction over that process. The current BLM Special Recreation Permit fee that is charged to promoters of commercial or competitive events on public lands is required by Federal regulations. BLM recognizes that visitors engaged in these events could end up paying a disproportionate share in fees for their legitimate use. We are interested in hearing from you regarding this issue and welcome your suggestions about how to make any proposed fee collections fair and equitable.

**Q. If fees are implemented, how will I know how this money was spent?**

A -- Any fee demonstration program that would be adopted by BLM would be adaptive in nature. The program would be designed to be flexible to reflect changing needs and fees would be adjusted accordingly. An annual independent audit is included as part of the public outreach program.

**Q. How do I participate in this public outreach effort and make my views known to BLM?**

A -- BLM is currently meeting with OHV groups, elected officials, and other affected constituencies and organizations to discuss the fee demonstration proposal. We also appreciate receiving individual suggestions and comments in person, by phone at 760-252-6000, or by email at [barstowohvfees@ca.blm.gov](mailto:barstowohvfees@ca.blm.gov).